

REINVESTING IN YOUTH

A Regional Partnership

2005 Third Quarter Report

October 10, 2005

Dear Friends of Reinvesting in Youth:

We are pleased to provide you with this report on Reinvesting in Youth's (RIY) activities in the third quarter of 2005.

I. Reinvesting in Youth Mission

Reinvesting in Youth seeks to demonstrate that:

- 1) We can reduce juvenile and adult crime, reduce reliance on incarceration and save public monies by implementing evidence-based programs at sufficient scale and with precise enough targeting to lower the number of kids locked up.
- 2) We can change the paradigm by which we fund such programs through the recognition, capture, and reinvestment of the public dollar savings that result from closing down secure beds and avoiding the need for other "deep-end" expenditures. We can be budget neutral at a time of severe budget constraints, and we can eliminate the need for foundation funding within four years.
- 3) We can reduce the disproportional involvement of youth of color in our juvenile and adult justice systems by increasing the capacity of community-based agencies serving youth and families of color.
- 4) We can bridge the gaps that now separate different parts of what should be an integrated system – with particular emphasis on mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, juvenile justice and youth and family services.

II. Progress toward achieving the Reinvesting in Youth objectives

A. Expand evidence-based intervention services for at-risk youth and families

Reinvesting in Youth continues to support the expansion of evidence based intervention services (Functional Family Therapy, Multi-Systemic Therapy and Aggression Replacement Training) focused on youth and families at high risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system.

B. State implementation of Reinvesting in Youth pilot program funding

The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration for the State of Washington has moved quickly to implement funding for the Reinvesting in Youth pilot program which was approved in the last legislative session. This program allocates \$1 million for the biennium to reimburse a limited number of counties (including \$600,000 for King County) for state savings generated by local investments in evidence – based intervention services. This is the essential first step to implement Reinvesting in Youth’s savings reinvestment strategy to sustain expanded state and local investments in these cost-effective programs. It will permit the replacement of foundation funding in King County by the end of 2006.

The State issued invitations to apply to counties throughout the state in July and announced in mid-August that Kitsap, Jefferson, Benton and Franklin counties have been selected from among 10 counties that applied. The inclusion of smaller counties both east and west of the Cascades will be helpful as we work to garner state-wide support for follow-up legislation and funding. To encourage other counties to participate Reinvesting in Youth has raised \$120,000 to help them meet their match requirements during the pilot period.

C. Reduce racial disparities in juvenile justice by building capacity within communities of color to address needs of youth

RIY seeks to reduce the disproportional involvement of youth of color in the juvenile justice system by strengthening the capacity of community based agencies that serve substantial numbers of youth of color. The strategy focuses on promising program evaluations, cultural competency training and “best practices” technical assistance.

♦ **Promising Program Evaluation** – This evaluation of recidivism reduction outcomes for seven existing youth programs in King County is proceeding, but not without challenges. The evaluation requires that risk assessments be administered for a significant number of individual youth in each of the programs on multiple occasions in order to track the impact of the program on risk and protective factors over time and to provide a basis for comparison of similar youth across programs. Tracking down and interviewing involved youth has been labor intensive and has proceeded more slowly than planned. Still there is a risk that not enough youth will be tracked in all programs to assure that the numbers are large enough to permit statistically significant conclusions. We have extended the end date of the evaluation by six months in order to increase the probability of success.

♦ Cultural Competency Assessment and Training

A fourth cohort of community based agencies began to receive Cultural Competency Assessment and Training from RIY in July. This brings the total number of community agencies that will receive this assistance to fourteen.

♦ Technical Assistance / Elements of Successful Programs

In addition to the technical assistance being provided through the promising program evaluation and cultural competency projects, the RIY 2003-2006 budget allocates

\$222,000 for technical assistance to foster research-based best practices in community agencies serving youth of color.

The research-based “Elements of Successful Programs Guidebook” and accompanying assessment tool were completed under King County’s direction in May 2005. RIY foundation funds will play the central role in the delivery of the “Elements” package over the course of 2005-06. RIY is funding assessments, improvement plans and technical assistance for the following agencies that were selected in a competitive process in July and August: Kent Youth & Family Services, Valley Cities / Federal Way Youth & Family Services, Ruth Dykeman Children’s Center, Renton Area Youth Services, Southeast Youth & Family Services, Southwest Youth & Family Services, Auburn Youth Resources, SafeFutures Youth Center, Youth Care, Powerful Voices, Girl Scouts / Totem Council, Northshore Youth & Family Services, Friends of Youth and Center for Human Services.

Eight agencies began the assessment process on September 9 with an orientation session. The assessments will lead to improvement plans, and RIY technical assistance in the amount of \$150,000 will help implement those plans. We also anticipate that the “Elements” assessment tool will provide a practical and affordable means by which funders in King County will in the future evaluate the practices of community based agencies and provide agencies with the guidance for continuous improvement.

C. Build regional partnership for juvenile justice reform

Over the next several months the Reinvesting in Youth Steering Committee, chaired by King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng, will be exploring future Steering Committee priorities and roles with respect to juvenile justice reform, given the fact that the Reinvesting in Youth project is currently scheduled to be completed in early 2007. The members of the Committee will be addressing the question whether the Steering Committee’s role should end at the same time or whether there are compelling reasons to extend into the future the Committee’s activities related to juvenile justice and youth services reform.

E. Systems Change / Lessons Learned Evaluation

The consultant firm, Organizational Research Services, has developed a strategy and timeline for this evaluation, and implementation began in September. This evaluation will: i) provide a qualitative assessment of program and system improvements resulting from RIY initiatives and partnerships and ii) identify “lessons learned”. The lessons learned portion of the evaluation will address the following questions:

- a. What were key elements that led to positive change?
- b. What were key barriers to success?
- c. How did RIY deal with barriers or opportunities and what was effective and ineffective?
- d. What mistakes were made or what opportunities were missed?
- e. What have we learned about the most productive and practical ways to evaluate government funded programs on a continuing basis in the future?

- f. What changes in systems, communities, agencies, or youth appear to be sustainable, and what will it take to sustain the changes noted (including political and funding support)?
- g. Are the processes replicable in other communities?
- h. Are the processes replicable in other contexts (e.g., early intervention, prevention, dealing with child abuse and neglect, alcohol and drug addiction, mental health treatment)

III. Future Funding Priorities

Reinvesting in Youth is currently looking at potential priorities for projects that would further advance its mission, should we be successful in raising additional foundation funds beyond those needed to implement the currently identified program. We are looking at the following possibilities:

1. Develop elements of successful programs guidebook and program assessment tool for prevention programs that reduce risk factors highly correlated with reducing future serious and violent juvenile offenses for youth not yet involved in the juvenile justice system. (The Elements of Successful Programs project currently being funded by RIY is applicable to intervention services that focus on youth already involved in the juvenile justice system.)
2. Support project that offers substantial prospect of contributing to the reduction of the disproportional involvement of youth of color in detention.
3. Determine the need for, feasibility of developing, and the extent of service provider interest in the development of an assessment tool that could be used to screen and diagnose youth for non-juvenile justice related services.

The Seattle Foundation application for additional funding was submitted on September 30, and the application to the Annie E. Casey is due in October.

IV. Conclusion

While there are many challenges still to be met by RIY, significant progress is being made on many fronts. Each of our activities is governed by our dual objectives: 1) to improve the lives of individual youth and families; and 2) to contribute to the development of *systems* that will sustain juvenile justice and youth service reforms after the Reinvesting in Youth project is complete.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

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